You're Beautiful To Me by brokenpromisesandhope

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Kali is nervous how Nancy will react to her shaved head.

You're Beautiful To Me

Author's Note:

> This is for a dear friend bisexualiet on tumblr- who wanted some reassurance on being a badass and beautiful. I am a person of color so I feel Kali's struggles- however I'm not Indian and I hope I did it justice. Please comment and kudos.
> Xx
> T

Kali doesn't even think about it until she does it. Until her sister, Karina shuts off the clippers and sets them down on the counter. She looks down at the tufts of thick black hair on the ground, and then back at herself in the mirror. With her shaved head. She's shaved her head before, does it every once in awhile when she needs a change. But the last time she'd shaved it, maybe a year and a half, she hadn't had Nancy.

It wasn't fair, Nancy was amazing, and she tried so hard. Kali would never forget the way Nancy's eyes went wide when she saw all of the traditional Indian food on the table. Her mom had cooked for hours, and not that she thought she wouldn't, but she was bringing a white girl home and her anxiety level was a thousand, but Nancy ate it all. And seconds. And asked her mom for the recipe, to which her younger brother, Kai had laughed. And Nancy had been there for Holi, and she always let Kali practice Henna designs on her. So why does she think Nancy would be worried by this?

Mostly because Nancy was white and conventionally attractive. She was short and thin, could eat anything she wanted and never gain a pound. And she had thin but full brows that she trimmed herself, and a thin nose, and bright blue eyes, and perfect skin and didn't really need makeup. And boys liked her because she was white and quiet and funny and sweet, and not a bitch and not colored.

Kali was. She was pushing overweight, and curvy and had thick hair everywhere, that made shaving horrible. And she was too loud and different and her family moving to Hawkins,Indiana put a very

permanent target on her back. She already felt bad for dragging Nancy down.

Before Kali had come to town, before she'd talked to Nancy, Nancy was the golden girl. Nancy Wheeler, golden girl, on the dance team, ex-girlfriend of quarterback Steve Harrington. From a perfect nuclear family, had a 4.0 gpa, was going to Berkley. She wore her brown hair perfectly curled and pearl earrings and the perfect pink lipgloss for her skin tone.

And after Kali came to town.. Nancy was now the dancing dyke who dated the dirty Indian girl. Okay it wasn't quite that bad. It was 2017, but also that didn't mean shit when Trump was running the country.

So yeah, she feels bad, for tarnishing Nancy's reputation. Nancy'd chopped off her hair, and let Kali bleach it blonde in her basement. She'd given Nancy some piecey bangs and introduced her to her favorite waterproof black eyeliner, and found her a leather jacket, almost exactly like Kali's because she got tired of Nancy stealing hers.

She loves her. She does. She doesn't care that she's seventeen, or that she lives in a small, racist, homophobic town. Or that neither of their families really accept their relationship. Their parents at least. Sure, Nancy came over and her mom made the tiki masala extra spicy for her, and they all cuddled on the couch and watched a movie, but the one time she'd tried to hold Nancy's hand, her mother had gone to the bathroom and been gone for the rest of the movie.

Nancy's Family was worse though. Mostly because Mike really liked her and Holly liked to play with her hair and trace her henna tattoos and Mrs.Wheeler nearly had a heart attack every time. They sat, not talking, eating one of her multiple casseroles, as Mrs.Wheeler talked, just to repeatedly refer to them as friends. She could see Nancy wince every time her mom said it, and then she'd apologize to Kali later, as if she could help it.

It wasn't the best. They were still in high school, still in a small town. Still had a year and a half before they could be in college together. Still Muslim and Christian. Nancy had to go to church every Sunday and Wednesday and was helping Mike with his confirmation. She wears a big fat diamond ring on her left middle finger, because the

Wheelers had money to waste on things like promise rings. Kali thought it was funny, especially since they had sex all the time, but once Nancy had told her when she was high that they probably didn't consider anything less than heterosexual penetrative sex, sex, so she probably wasn't going to Hell on a technicality. Kali had laughed at that and tackled her back on the bed, licking the taste of smoke out of her mouth.

Nancy was great. She was funny and smart and anyone who ever made an ignorant comment to Kali had to deal with the wrath of Nancy Wheeler. And although Kali thought it was hot, it was scary. For their six month anniversary, Nancy bought her a diamond heart necklace that probably cost a couple months rent. Kali never took it off, though at first she'd tried to insist it was too expensive, but Nancy wouldn't allow it.

And as much as Kali loves Nancy, she was sure Nancy loved her just as much. The way she played with Nancy's hair, or insisted she do expensive face masks with her. She was she gave the best back rubs, she always let Kali control the radio in the car, knew all of Kali's favorite food orders, even when she could barely pronounce it. She practically lived in Kali's clothes any time they weren't at school. Though she'd gotten detention a few times for wearing Kali's leather jacket over her uniform. It's not like Nancy has ever snubbed Kali in public, or ignored the fact that she was hella white and rich and Kali was hell foreign and poor. She did everything she could to make Kali comfortable. So why did Kali feel embarrassed of herself?

She knew why. Because deep down she knew, no matter how many times she woke up across from Nancy, her lashes sweeping her cheekbones, freckles on her nose, Nancy deserved better. Someone who was prettier, with a thin nose, and a small mouth, and probably someone white quite truthfully.

Someone thin as Nancy who could rock bikinis just as well as her and also wear size small shirts and 0 zero jeans. Someone who was naturally pretty and wore minimal makeup, not winged eyeliner and bright red lipstick. And certainly not someone with a shaved head. Kali could pretend. Sometimes she'd curl her hair, or wait until she couldn't stand it any longer, before shaving the side of her head. She'd spend extra time on her makeup so that even though she was

wearing a lot, her eyeliner wouldn't be crooked or her highlighter wouldn't be that blinding, as if that made a difference. She'd live off iced coffee and Diet Coke in hopes that she could fit into one of Nancy's plaid shirts, at least unbuttoned. But now, she was going to be an embarrassment.

She does not cry, because she hasn't cried in a long time, not since her dad left, and she is not going to cry over Nancy Wheeler. At least not in the daytime. Maybe at night when she can bury her face in her pillow and scream and cry and then wake up and deny it ever happening.

She's supposed to meet Nancy for a study session at her house, which really means they'll just make out until Mrs.Wheeler calls them down for dinner, and then Nancy will rest her hand on Kali's thigh as they ear whatever hotdish that Mr.Wheeler had requested. Mrs.Wheeler has not ever asked Kali if she had any special requests, or even any allergies. It was so different from her own mother, making Nancy's favorites. However once, Nancy had invited her to dinner and greeted her at the door in an apron, Betty Crocker ready. She'd made her a delicious taco hotdish, and after that, Mrs.Wheeler got the hint.

Kali would prefer to wait outside for Nancy, but Nancy never lets her. She walks the three flights of stairs up to their apartment and knocks, every time. Kali hears Ravi open the door and presumably jumps in Nancy's arms, which he always does. She checks herself out in the mirror one more time. She's got a baseball cap that says 'slay' covering up her freshly shaved head, huge gold hoop earrings.

She'd done her eye makeup especially dramatic because Nancy liked it like that, and her favorite dark purple lipstick. She wore her leather jacket over an oversized white T-shirt, leggings and her black combat boots. She sighed and squared her shoulders, heading out to greet her girlfriend.

Her brother is still in Nancy's arms because he's dramatic, and Karina's waving from the couch.

"Ms.Prasad, I love your hijab today, yellow is your color."

Her mother nods,

“Thank you Nancy. Have fun.”

“We will mom. Ravi, come on, leave Nancy alone.”

He links his arms tighter around her neck like four year olds do,
“No! I’m her favorite!”

Nancy smiles,
“You are so my favorite, but I’ve got to go. I’ll be back later.”

“Promise?”

She holds out a pinky and he links his brown one with hers,
“I promise. I’ll see you all later,” she says setting him down.

She’s still wearing her school uniform and Kali knows it’s because she’d had to play chauffeur to Mike and his friends after school, and Thursday afternoon was track. She smiles wise at Kali and gives her a hug, even though Kali can see she’s tired.

She leads Kali down to her Kia Sorento and they slide in. Nancy’s got an iced coffee for her and Kali’s phone automatically connects, and Halsey starts playing in the background.

“So what’s up?” Nancy asks, “sorry I’m a little late. But the good news is my parents have a dinner tonight, so we have the house to ourselves. For awhile at least. Holly is getting a ride home from dance and Mike is at Will’s for awhile.”

Kali smiles uneasily,
“Sounds good to me.”

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah, definitely.”

It’s silent the rest of the ride, and then Nancy parks in her driveway and takes Kali’s hand and leads her in the house. They kick off their shoes and head up to Nancy’s room. Nancy collapses on the bed and tugs Kali down next to her,

“What’s wrong?” Nancy asks, propping her head up on her arm.

Kali looks at her, shimmery eyeshadow creased, eyeliner smudged, leftover mauve lipstick still shiny on her lips, and so goddamn beautiful. She just pulls off her hat and looks down. She's literally so ugly and Nancy's gonna tell her to get out because she deserves someone as pretty as her, and Kali wasn't even that with hair.

She jumps when Nancy grabs her arms,
"What's wrong with it? I love it." Nancy says with a smile.

Kali looks up at her and shakes her head,
"I look, I, I don't look like I should be your girlfriend," she just leaves it at that.

Nancy raises an eyebrow,
"What do you mean?"

Kali bites her bottom lip,
"You deserve someone as beautiful as you. Someone your family approves of. Someone's who's-" she's pretty sure the white is implied and Nancy's eyes fill with tears.

"You are as beautiful as me. You are so beautiful. And I love you. I don't give a damn who my family approves of or not. They're never going to approve of anyone unless they have a penis! And we both know that's not going to happen."

"They'd probably be able to get over the lesbian thing if I wasn't brown and bald," Kali deadpans.

Nancy's nails tighten into the skin of her arms,
"Don't say that. You are amazing. I love you, no matter what. You think some, what, hair, is going to change that?"

Kali shrugs,
"I dunno. I'm not, I don't know Nancy. Look at you, and look at me."

Nancy shakes her head and wipes away a tear,
"What are you talking about? I don't, I'm too skinny, and pale as hell, and my face breaks out like three times a week. You are gorgeous. Your eyes are so big and beautiful, and I could never get my eyeliner even half as straight as yours. And I love your nose, and you're curvy

as hell. You look so good. You're so beautiful. And even if I didn't think you were physically the most beautiful person I've ever had the honor of being with, your soul is beautiful, your heart. I am in love with all of you," she says, voice shaking.

"But,"

"But nothing. Do you really think I'm so shallow?" Nancy asks, seriously.

"No of course not, but I'm just saying,"

"I'm just saying that I love you Kali Lynn Prasad. And there is nothing you could do to make me think any different," Nancy says leaning in to give her a soft kiss.

"I, I know that. But, sometimes it just feels like the whole world is against us, and I have to be this version of someone, some woman that, I'm just not," Kali says softly, staring at Nancy's white hand a top her brown one.

"Fuck the world. And fuck anyone that makes you think you're not good enough, or society's idea of beautiful. You're my idea of beautiful. In every way that matters."

Kali nods,
"Okay. You're right."

Nancy laughs,
"Of course I'm right. Especially when you've got this badass new haircut. You look so sexy," Nancy says, running a hand over her head.

"Okay, that's a bit of overkill."

Nancy shakes her head,
"Not at all. You look super sexy and bad ass. Don't get me wrong, I like your long hair too, but this is nice. It's unfair, it just means you can pull off everything. Unlike me."

Kali shakes her head,
"You can pull off anything, so shut up."

“So not true.”

“I have seen you in your younger brother’s sweats and been turned on so please shut up.”

Nancy flips her off and Kali laughs, collapsing on the pillows and dragging Nancy down to lay with her,

“Well I have seen you with the buzz cut and I’m turned on,” Nancy says with a laugh. She rugs Kali’s head down and places a kiss right on top of her head, “You know I love you with all my heart right? I don’t care that we’re seventeen. Or my parents are pretty homophobic. Or your mom doesn’t like my very much. Or that we’re not the same religion. And you know I don’t give a shit what other people think. I was a slut when I was dating a guy, so now I’m just a lesbian slut,” Nancy says with a shrug.

Kali laughs, because she knows that Nancy means every single word,

“You’re the badass.”

“Can we both be badasses?”

Kali kisses her,
“Of course. I love you too Nancy.”

Nancy smiles and runs a hand over her shaved head, eyes crinkling at the edges,
“I know you do. I love you too baby.”